DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 531 CE 085 678

AUTHOR	Moran, Tyler T.; Petsod, Daranee
TITLE	Newcomers in the American Workplace: Improving Employment Outcomes for Low-Wage Immigrants and Refugees.
SPONS AGENCY	Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY.; Hitachi Foundation, Washington, DC.; Ford Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	49p.; Produced by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, and Neighborhood Funders Group.
AVAILABLE FROM	Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, P.O. Box 1100, Sebastopol, CA 95473-1100 ($13). Tel: 707-795-2705; Fax: 707-581-1716; Web site: http://www.gcir.org.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Access to Education; Employer Attitudes; Employment Practices; *Employment Projections; English (Second Language); Equal Opportunities (Jobs); *Immigrants; Institutional Cooperation; Intercultural Programs; Job Placement; Job Training; *Labor Conditions; Labor Force; Labor Force Development; *Policy Formation; Population Trends; Public Policy; Second Language Learning; Unskilled Workers; *Working Poor

ABSTRACT

First-generation immigrants play a crucial role in the U.S. economy, but despite their pivotal role many immigrant workers confront enormous challenges in the labor force. The immigrant population increased from 19.8 million in 1990 to 31.1 million in 2000, comprising 11.1% of the U.S. population and 12.4% of the nation's workforce. Immigrants are expected to account for half of the working-age population growth between 2006 and 2015 and for all of the growth between 2016 and 2035, yet they are concentrated in low-skill, low-pay jobs. Some of the challenges that keep immigrants in working poverty are as follows: (1) immigration status; (2) inaccessibility of job training and placement programs; (3) rarity of job-based benefits; (4) ineligibility for government programs; and (5) discrimination and exploitation in the workplace. Some of the recommendations to funders to improve conditions are as follows: (1) enhance language access to programs; (2) integrate job training with English-acquisition and cultural orientation; (3) develop workforce programs that forge multisector partnerships; (4) help immigrants gain fair recognition and receive accreditation for their skills and education; (5) successfully educate children of immigrants; (6) educate and develop the leadership of immigrant workers; (7) protect immigrant workers who risk intimidation for union activities; and (8) improve public policy, employer practices, and economic outcomes for low-wage immigrants. (Contains endnotes, recommended readings, and resources on immigrant worker issues.) (MO)

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IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR LOW-WAGE IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP WORKING GROUP ON LABOR AND COMMUNITY

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About Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) seeks to move the philanthropic field to advance the contributions and address the needs of the world's growing and increasingly diverse immigrant and refugee populations. With a core focus on the United States, GCIR provides grantmakers with opportunities for learning, networking, and collaboration, as well as information resources that:

- Enhance philanthropy's awareness of issues affecting immigrants and refugees;
- Deepen the field's understanding of how these issues are integral to community building in today's dynamic social, economic, and political environment; and
- Increase philanthropic support for both broad and immigrant/refugee-focused strategies that benefit newcomer populations and strengthen the larger society.

GCIR's work is animated by a fundamental belief in democratic values, equal opportunity, and justice for all immigrants and refugees. We recognize the significant contributions that newcomers and their children make to the economic, cultural, and social fabric of their new communities. These contributions will only increase in light of their unprecedented growth and diversity in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States and in many other countries around the world. Given these factors, GCIR firmly believes that:

- Immigrant and refugee issues are central community-building issues for philanthropy.
- Philanthropic institutions are leaders in proactively integrating diverse immigrant populations into the larger community.
- Community institutions and immigrant-based organizations, with strong support from the philanthropic sector, make a substantial positive impact on the lives of immigrants and refugees.

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NFG

About Neighborhood Funders Group and its Working Group on Labor and Community

The Neighborhood Funders Group (NFG) is a membership association of grantmaking institutions. Its mission is to strengthen the capacity of organized philanthropy to understand and support community-based efforts to organize and improve the economic and social fabric of low-income urban neighborhoods and rural communities. NFG provides information, learning opportunities, and other professional development activities to its national membership, and encourages the support of policies and practices that advance economic and social justice.

NFG's Working Group on Labor and Community is a national network of funders committed to fostering greater collaboration among foundations, labor unions, and community groups to address issues facing the working poor. The Working Group's goals are to:

- Provide opportunities for foundations and unions to learn more about one another.
- Increase support for non-profit organizations that build partnerships between unions and community groups.
- Increase funding for leadership development among women and workers of color.
- Promote opportunities to meet with workers as well as union, religious and community leaders involved in major organizing campaigns among low-wage workers, innovative economic development efforts, or public policy initiatives.
- Identify areas of agreement and common concern in the public policy arena, to maximize the impact of philanthropic resources.
- Share learnings with members and other funders through its listserv, web site, special publications, and conference workshops.

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America Was Built by Immigrants, © Corky Lee

Executive Summary

First-generation immigrants play a crucial role in the U.S. economy, comprising almost one in eight workers[1] and one in four low-wage workers.[2] They fill critical jobs, are the backbone of many industries, and are net contributors to the nation's tax base. Without current and future immigrants in the workforce, our aging society will be dramatically short of workers to staff its offices, factories, and farms; short of savings and investment to support national economic growth; and short of tax revenues to finance government services and Social Security outlays.

Despite their pivotal role in the U.S. economy, many immigrant workers confront enormous challenges in the labor force: language and cultural barriers, exploitative working conditions, immigration-status vulnerabilities, restrictions on access to public services and benefits, and workforce development and education systems that do not respond to their needs. Disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs, immigrants make up 20 percent of all low-income families,[3] although they constitute about 11 percent of the total population.

Given immigrants' growing numbers and their expanding economic role in U.S. society, addressing challenges and creating opportunities for immigrants to succeed in the labor force are critical prerequisites to improve the economic security for all low-wage working families and ensure the future vitality of our economy.

In response, foundations can consider a range of grantmaking strategies depending on their funding approaches, issue priorities, geographic focus, and level of interest in immigration. By incorporating immigrant workers into their grantmaking priorities, foundations can play a vital role in spurring and supporting innovative strategies to improve working conditions, increase wages, enhance employment mobility, and strengthen economic security for all low-wage workers.

FINDINGS

Profile of Immigrants in the Workforce

1. The face of America and its workforce has changed. The immigrant population in the United States increased from 19.8 million in 1990 to 31.1 million in 2000. Immigrants now comprise 11.1 percent of the U.S. population and 12.4 percent of the nation's workforce.[4] In the 1990s, 78.2 percent of the foreign-born population came from Latin American and Asian countries,[5] many of which have poor economic conditions and low levels of investment in education and skill development.

2. Immigrants will account for half of the working-age population growth between 2006 and 2015 and for all of the growth between 2016 and 2035, assuming today's levels of immigration remain constant. Their labor is critically needed to replace the declining number of working-age Americans as the "baby boomer" generation retires.[6]

3. Immigrant workers are concentrated in low-skill, low-pay jobs, although they are represented across the employment spectrum. For example, almost 63 percent of foreign-born workers, primarily from Latin America, work in service, manufacturing, and agricultural occupations.[7] Roughly 17 percent of highly skilled technology professionals working in the United States are foreign born.[8]

Challenges Keeping Immigrants in Working Poverty

1. Immigration status matters. Approximately nine million undocumented immigrants live in the United States, accounting for about 28 percent of all immigrants in this country.[9] Nearly five million undocumented immigrants are part of the U.S. workforce.[10] Immigration status plays a central role in keeping many undocumented workers in poverty. Without legal status, they have little choice but to remain in jobs that pay minimum wage or below, with few or no benefits such as health insurance or pensions. These jobs are frequently part-time or seasonal, forcing immigrants to string together several jobs at one time to support their families. And working conditions are often dangerous or unhealthy. The aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks has only compounded legal-status challenges for undocumented immigrants.

2. Many immigrants confront multiple barriers to employment. Immigrants arrive in the United States with a variety of educational and occupational backgrounds. While newly arrived immigrants include a higher percentage of people with advanced degrees compared to native-born persons, they also include a higher percentage of people with fewer than nine years of formal education. Immigrants' lack of English proficiency, limited skills, low levels of education, and poor understanding of American cultural and workplace norms restrict their access to good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and provide opportunities for advancement.

3. Many job training and placement programs are not accessible to or meet the unique needs of immigrant and other limited-English workers. One-stop centers and other publicly funded programs often have difficulty providing basic language access, much less culturally competent services.

4. Low-wage immigrant workers are the least likely to receive job-based benefits. In 2000, only 26 percent of immigrant workers had job-based health insurance, compared to 41.9 percent for native-born workers.[11] Immigrants are also less likely to hold jobs that provide other fringe benefits, such as paid sick days and pensions.

5. Many immigrants do not access or are ineligible for government programs. Immigrants, including those who are eligible, are the least likely to access programs that support low-income workers, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Unemployment Insurance. Additionally, legal immigrants entering the United States after 1996 are ineligible, during their first five years in the country, for federal programs such as Food Stamps and Medicaid that many native-born, low-wage workers regularly access to support their families.

6. Immigrants suffer unique discrimination and exploitation in the workplace. Many U.S. employers treat immigrant workers fairly and comply with labor and immigration law. Some, however, discriminate against them or exploit them through low wages, long hours, poor working conditions, or denial of other rights. Although native-born workers can also be subject to such treatment, immigration status, compounded by cultural and linguistic isolation, increases immigrants' vulnerability to discrimination and exploitation.

7. Immigrants who participate in union-organizing drives are particularly vulnerable to employer intimidation tactics, such as reporting workers to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service).* Although such tactics are illegal under U.S. labor law, penalties are light and often come too late to change the outcome of organizing campaigns.

8. Current labor laws do not provide comprehensive worker protections. Immigrants often hold jobs, such as temporary and seasonal jobs, that are not protected under labor laws. Even immigrants who are protected frequently do not file complaints, fearing that they will be fired, reported to the INS, and/or deported.

9. Improving working conditions, wages, and benefits in low-skill occupations is an important strategy. Not every worker—immigrant or native—will be able to acquire the education and skills needed to move into jobs at the higher rungs of the economic ladder. In addition, low-skill jobs in the service, manufacturing, and agricultural industries will always be part of the economy, and some occupations, such as home healthcare aides, are expected to experience significant growth in this decade. These jobs do not necessarily have to pay poverty-level wages and no benefits. In many cases, particularly where workers are covered under a collective-bargaining agreement, employers do pay decent wages, provide family health and pension benefits, and contribute to training funds that offer career advancement opportunities.

**The INS, formerly part of the U.S. Department of Justice, was reorganized into two separate bureaus—the Bureau of Border Security and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services—under the Department of Homeland Security, established in fall 2002. Restructuring the INS has only begun at the time of this writing. Therefore, this report utilizes the more commonly recognized term "INS" when referring to the federal immigration department.*

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FUNDERS

Regardless of grantmaking approach, priorities, and geographic focus, foundations can support a range of strategic options to improve working conditions, strengthen workers' rights, and expand employment opportunities for low-wage immigrant workers in ways that improve economic security for all workers. Foundations can support:

1. Efforts to enhance language access to welfare-to-work programs and increase the availability of English-language classes.

2. Comprehensive workforce development programs that integrate job training (both hard and soft skills), English-language acquisition, and cultural orientation.

3. Workforce development programs that forge multi-sector partnerships among employers, unions, community groups, faith-based organizations, and government.

4. Programs that help immigrants gain fair recognition and receive accreditation for the skills, education, and experience they bring from their country of origin.

5. Strategies to improve the ability of public education systems to successfully educate children of immigrants to improve their long-term employment outcomes and economic security.

6. Efforts to educate and develop the leadership of immigrant and other low-wage workers to protect their workplace rights, increase their wages and benefits, and improve their employment potential.

7. Community-based efforts to protect immigrant workers who may risk intimidation, job loss, or deportation if they participate in union-organizing drives.

8. Advocacy and organizing to improve public policy, employer practices, and economic outcomes for low-wage immigrants.

9. Research on low-wage immigrant worker issues to inform program and policy development.

10. Legal services, advocacy, and litigation to protect and advance workers' rights.

Introduction

The foreign-born population in the United States grew by nearly 58 percent in the 1990s. In 2000, 31.1 million immigrants and refugees lived in the United States, constituting the largest number of foreign-born residents in U.S. history.[12] These immigrants play a crucial role in the U.S. labor force and economy. Although they account for 11.1 percent of the total population, they comprise 12.4 percent of the total workforce.[13]

This report uses "immigrant" as a general term to describe foreign-born individuals living in the United States. This includes legal permanent residents, refugees, asylees, naturalized citizens, persons in the country as temporary workers, and, in most cases, undocumented immigrants.

Immigrants have a high rate of workforce participation, play a pivotal role in revitalizing decaying inner-city neighborhoods and dying rural communities, and help maintain a healthy tax base. Given the graying of America, immigrant workers are also essential to financing government services, supporting our Social Security system, and maintaining a vibrant economy, now and in the future.

Despite their invaluable contributions to the U.S. economy, many immigrants live in poverty, accounting for one out of every five low-income families.[14] This poverty is directly related to the challenges and barriers they confront in the labor force: language and cultural barriers, immigration-status vulnerabilities, restrictions on access to public services and benefits, and an education and training system that does not respond to their needs. The economic downturn and the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks have compounded these challenges for immigrant and other low-wage workers. The impact has been especially harsh on the estimated nine million undocumented immigrants who live in the United States.

The above factors, particularly linguistic and cultural isolation and lack of legal status, increase immigrants' vulnerability to unscrupulous employer practices. Such practices, even when targeted only at immigrants, often force down standards, working conditions, and wages throughout a company or an industry. What happens to immigrant workers clearly has a direct impact on all U.S. workers.

Philanthropy can play a strategic role in improving the future outlook for immigrant workers. This publication seeks to increase grantmakers' understanding of the major challenges and barriers facing low-wage immigrant workers and highlight promising strategies and approaches to address them. It also offers a set of recommendations for how funders, including those without a specific interest in immigration, can respond whether they fund direct services, research, evaluation, organizing, advocacy, or litigation; and whether they work at the local, regional, or national level.

Staggering demographic changes, increasing numbers of families with members of differing immigration statuses, and expanding importance of immigrant workers in the economy make it clear that if we are to improve the lives of all workers, foundations must pay particular attention to addressing the needs of low-wage immigrant workers. By incorporating immigrant workers into their grantmaking portfolios, foundations can play a vital role in spurring and supporting innovative strategies to improve working conditions, increase employment mobility, and enhance economic security for all low-wage workers.

Tomato Pickers, David Bacon, 1998.

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A Profile of America's Newcomers

Immigration, perhaps more than any other social, political, or economic process, has shaped the United States over the past century. As the next decades of the 21st century unfold, the rate of immigrant-driven transformation, which began in earnest in the 1960s, will continue to accelerate. Never before has the Statue of Liberty, long the symbol of America's rich immigrant heritage, lifted her torch over so many foreign-born individuals and families.

—*A New Century: Immigration and the U.S.*, Migration Policy Institute, May 2002.

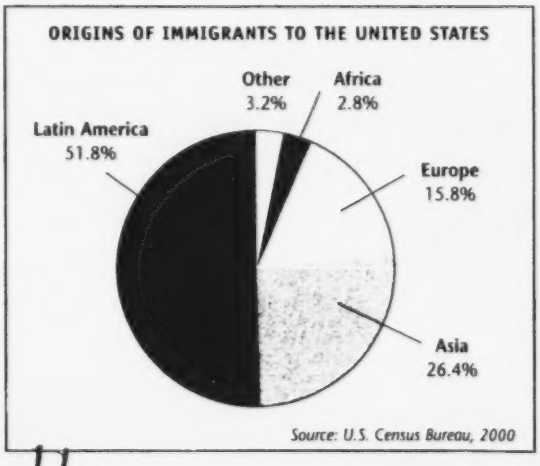
HOW IMMIGRANTS ENTER THE UNITED STATES

Foreign-born individuals enter the United States under two legal categories: immigrants and non-immigrants. By legal definition, immigrants are persons seeking to become permanent residents in the United States. Approximately 75 percent of all immigrants come to join family members.[15] Most of the remaining immigrants come for employment or to flee persecution. Non-immigrants seek admission to the United States for a limited period of time and for specific purposes, such as tourism and academic study.

Some immigrants enter the United States without legal authorization; they are known as "undocumented immigrants." Some undocumented immigrants cross the northern or southern border on their own. Others are brought in by smugglers, often incurring a huge debt that takes them years to repay and traps them in extreme poverty. Still others enter the country legally, e.g., as a tourist or a student, but overstay their non-immigrant visa and become undocumented. Undocumented immigrants are not authorized to work in the United States.

WHERE IMMIGRANTS COME FROM

The composition of immigrants to the United States has changed dramatically. While the vast majority of immigrants in the greater part of the 1900s came from Europe and Canada, immigrants who have arrived since 1970 primarily come from Latin America and Asia. Immigrants from Europe and Canada, who accounted for two thirds of the intake in the 1950s, comprised only 18.5 percent of immigrants in the 1990s. In contrast, immigrants from Latin America, predominantly Mexico, accounted for 51.8 percent of the total immigrant population, and immigrants from Asian countries—primarily China, India, Philippines, and Vietnam—constituted 26.4 percent.[16]



MANY IMMIGRANTS ARE RECENT ARRIVALS

In terms of volume, the United States experienced the largest wave of immigration in its history between 1990 and 2000. More than 13 million immigrants came to the United States in that period.[17] Therefore, 42 percent of all immigrants, as of 2000, had been in this country for ten or fewer years. These immigrants' recent arrival has implications for their language and skills training needs, their connection to the workforce, and their wage-earning ability.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Immigrants arrive in the United States with a variety of educational backgrounds. Compared with native-born citizens, immigrants include both a higher percentage of individuals who have attended graduate school as well as a higher percentage of those who have fewer than nine years of schooling. More than 40 percent of non-citizens have less than a high-school education, compared to only 13.4 percent of native-born Americans.[18] Given their low levels of education, these immigrants will likely need basic skills training, ESL classes, and support services to succeed in the U.S. workforce.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	CITIZENSHIP STATUS		
	Native	Naturalized Citizen	Not a Citizen
Less than 9th grade	4.7%	15.6%	27.3%
9th to 12th grade	8.7%	8.2%	12.9%
High-school graduate	34.3%	26.4%	23.9%
Some college or associate degree	26.7%	19.1%	13.9%
Bachelor's degree	17.2%	18.8%	14.1%
Advanced degree	8.4%	11.9%	7.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

IMMIGRANT WORKERS TRANFORM RURAL NEBRASKA

Having a substantial cluster of immigrants settling in a small town often poses a challenge to the community, which is not prepared to integrate them. And immigrants themselves, far from their usual support systems, face an equally large adjustment.

Between 1990 and 2000, Nebraska experienced its largest population gain in 80 years, principally due to a significant rise in the state's foreign-born population. Approximately 94,000 Latinos settled in Nebraska, along with immigrants from at least 32 other ethnic groups from countries such as Vietnam, Russia, Laos, and Iraq. Many have come for jobs in the meatpacking plants that heavily recruited workers from Mexico and Central America.

The influx of immigrants into small meatpacking towns has changed the face of rural, predominantly white Nebraska. For example, the town of Schuyler, 90 minutes from Omaha, recorded six Latinos among its 15,000 residents in the 1990 Census. Today, 45 percent of its population of 22,000 is Latino, according to the 2000 count. The schools in Lexington, Nebraska, another meatpacking town with a population of approximately 10,000, now enroll students speaking 35 different languages.

Immigrants have rejuvenated small rural towns by filling jobs, buying homes, and supporting local businesses. They have also raised issues inherent to rapid economic, cultural, and social change. Racial and ethnic tensions have arisen in the competition for jobs. Schools have faced skyrocketing demand for ESL instruction and have had to rethink ways to reach out to and involve monolingual immigrant parents. Similar challenges have arisen throughout local housing, health care, social service, and legal systems.

Immigrants' growing presence and expanding economic role have also commanded attention at the state level. Thanks largely to advocacy by local community organizations, faith-based groups, public-interest organizations, and labor unions, Republican Governor Mike Johanns issued the "Nebraska Workers Bill of Rights," which lists existing workplace laws that employers must follow and post in the workplace. Responding in part to advocacy by the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, the Nebraska State Legislature formed the Task Force on the Productive Integration of the Immigrant Workforce in Nebraska. This bi-partisan task force issued a 25-page report, urging the state to address such issues as educational aid formulas, the legal needs of undocumented workers, line speed and injury rates in the workplace, and the lack of bilingual staff in health and human services.[19]

CITIZENSHIP STATUS

Of the 31.1 million immigrants in the United States, 32 percent are naturalized citizens, 30 percent are Lawful Permanent Residents (green-card holders), 28 percent are undocumented immigrants, and five percent are refugees.[20]

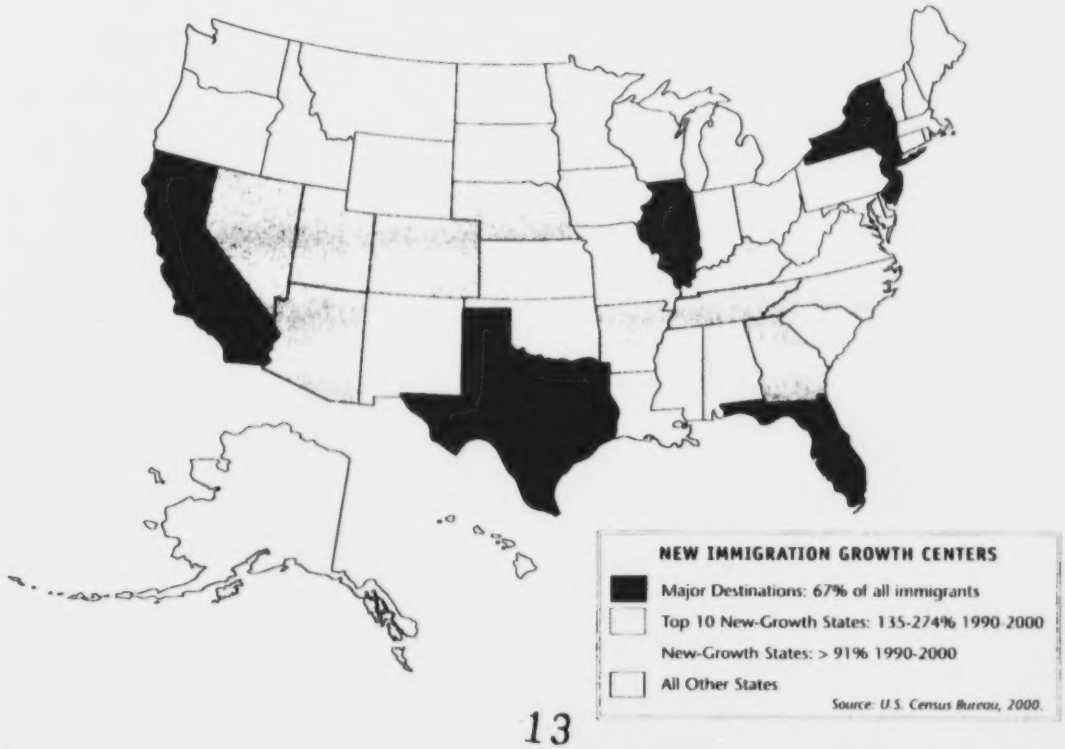
Today's immigrants live in families with members whose immigration status varies. "Mixed-status families," which have at least one immigrant parent and one U.S. citizen child, comprise 85 percent of all immigrant families with children. In fact, one out of every ten children in the United States lives in a family where at least one parent is a non-citizen—but more than three-quarters of these children are themselves U.S. citizens.[21] Policies and programs targeting immigrants, therefore, have an unintended impact on U.S. citizens in immigrant families, particularly citizen children.

GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION AND DISPERSION

About two thirds of all immigrants live in California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois. However, the immigrant population in these traditional immigrant states grew by only 31 percent compared to 61 percent in new immigrant gateway states.[22] The top-ten states that experienced the highest rate of immigrant growth during the 1990s are, in descending order, North Carolina, Georgia, Nevada, Arkansas, Utah, Tennessee, Nebraska, Arizona, Colorado, and Kentucky.[23] The immigrant population increase in these new-growth states ranged from 136 percent in Kentucky to 274 percent in North Carolina. The map below illustrates the geographic concentration and dispersion of immigrants.

IMMIGRATION'S ROLE IN U.S. POPULATION GROWTH

During the 1990s, immigrants accounted for slightly over 31 percent of the nation's population growth, the largest percentage increase in the twentieth century.[24] The impact of immigration varied by region. For example, all of the population growth in the Northeast region in the last decade was due to immigration, but only 28 percent of the population growth in the South region was attributable to immigration.


NEW IMMIGRATION GROWTH CENTERS
Major Destinations: 67% of all immigrants
Top 10 New-Growth States: 135-274% 1990-2000
New-Growth States: > 91% 1990-2000
All Other States
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Bert Corona and His Grandson, David Bacon, 2000.

Immigrants in the Workforce

The U.S. economy would have stumbled in the past decade without the new [immigrant] arrivals, and most immigrants contribute more in taxes than they use in services.

—*Findings from* Immigrant Workers and the Great American Job Machine: The Contributions of New Foreign Immigration to National and Regional Labor Force Growth in the 1990s, *as summarized in the Washington Post, December 2, 2002.*

THE VITAL ROLE OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS

In 1990, immigrants constituted 12.4 percent of the nation's workforce, some 17 million workers in a civilian workforce of 140 million. Nearly five million immigrant workers were undocumented.

Immigrants accounted for half of all new entries into the U.S. workforce in the last decade.[25] In contrast, they made up only 10 percent of new workforce entries in the 1970s and roughly a quarter in the 1980s.[26] New immigrants arriving in the 1990s were more likely to be young and prime working age than the native-born population. For example, 61 percent of new immigrant workers were under 35 years of age, compared to only 38 percent of native-born workers. Without immigrant workers, the U.S. labor force would have experienced a substantial decline of workers in prime working-age groups and an overall reduction in its labor force, a problem that now concerns many European nations.

Assuming that today's levels of immigration remain constant, immigrants will account for half of the working-age population growth between 2006 and 2015 and for all of the growth between 2016 and 2035. These estimates reflect the declining number of native-born working-age Americans and the retirement of the "baby boomer" generation.[27]

However, we need not look far into the future to understand the pivotal role immigrant workers play in the U.S. economy. Without new immigrants, for example, the labor force in the Northeast, a region most dependent on immigrant labor, would have declined by more than 1.3 million workers between 1990-2001.[28] Indeed, immigrant workers accounted for all the workforce growth in the Northeast during this period. And, they were responsible for 67 percent of the workforce growth in Florida, 85 percent in Illinois, and 87 percent in California.[29]

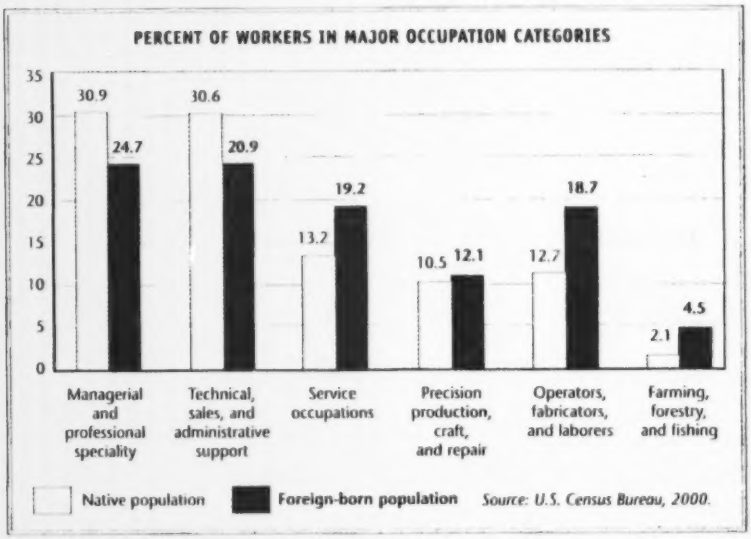
The supply of immigrant workers has been critical to the expansion of U.S. industry in the last decade. Even while absorbing millions of new immigrant workers in the 1990s, for example, the U.S. workforce saw the unemployment rate fall from 6.3 percent in 1990 to 3.9 percent in 2000.[30]

The United States also relies heavily on immigrant workers to support its tax base. In 1997, the country reaped a $50 billion surplus from taxes paid by immigrants to all levels of government.[31] In New York, immigrants paid $19.3 billion in taxes, of which $13.3 billion or 69 percent went to the federal government in the form of income taxes, Social Security taxes, and unemployment insurance.[32]

These data clearly illustrate that, without current and future immigrants, the United States will be dramatically short of workers to staff its offices, factories, and farms; short of savings and investment to support national economic growth; and short of tax revenues to finance government services and Social Security outlays.[33]

SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS WITH CONCENTRATIONS OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS

Immigrant workers can be found at both the high and low ends of the labor force. Roughly 17 percent of highly



skilled technology professionals working in the U.S. today are foreign born.[34] But the majority of immigrant workers are concentrated in low-skill, low-paying jobs. For example, 54.5 percent of foreign-born workers, primarily from Latin America, work in service, manufacturing, and agricultural occupations.[35]

Immigrants tend to be underrepresented at the higher end of the occupational scale. While 30.9 percent of native-born workers worked in professional and managerial jobs, only 24.7 percent of all foreign-born workers held such positions. Limited education and English proficiency are key factors that limit immigrants' access to these higher-paying jobs. *Please see table* ***Percent of Workers in Major Occupation Categories*** *above.*

Of the estimated five million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. workforce, more than 20 percent work in manufacturing, another 20 percent in the service industry, about 12 percent in construction, nearly 15 percent in hospitality, and between 20 and 28 percent in agriculture.[36] In Chicago, for example, undocumented workers make up five percent of metropolitan Chicago's labor market and represent a growing segment of the low-wage workforce.[37] Undocumented immigrants are clearly filling critical gaps in the nation's workforce, yet these workers have very few rights.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) at the U.S. Department of Labor projects that some industries with a high percentage of immigrant workers, such as garment and other manufacturing sectors, will experience job losses in this decade.[38] This decline will force workers to find employment in other industries, increasing the need for language and skills training, job placement, and support services.

However, many sectors of the economy employing large numbers of immigrants will see average to above-average growth in this decade. For instance, employment in service occupations will increase by 5.1 million, or 19.5 percent, the second largest numerical gain and the second highest rate of growth among the major occupational groups. The number of jobs in the food preparation and serving-related occupations are expected to see the highest increase among the service occupations, 1.6 million jobs added by 2010. However, healthcare support occupations, such as home health-care aides, are expected to grow the fastest, 33.4 percent, adding 1.1 million new jobs.[39]

Although the number of jobs in many industries with a high concentration of immigrant workers will grow, most of these jobs often do not pay family-sustaining wages, provide important benefits such as health insurance, and offer much advancement opportunity. Many are intentionally structured by employers to be part-time, in order to avoid paying benefits. However, there is nothing that dictates that these jobs must remain poverty-wage jobs with no benefits. And, in many cases, particularly where workers are covered under a collective-bargaining agreement, employers do pay family health and pension benefits and contribute to training funds that offer career advancement opportunities.

WORKING POVERTY

Recent immigrants and non-citizens are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty compared to native-born Americans and naturalized citizens.[40] Forty-three percent of immigrant and 44 percent of refugee families with full-time workers have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level in comparison to 26 percent of native-born workers.[41] Overall, children in immigrant families make up one in four low-income[42] children in the United States.[43] In fact, 43 percent of children living in immigrant families with full-time workers are low income, compared to 26 percent of native families.[44] However, not all working immigrants are low income, and wage differences depend on the country of origin, educational attainment, skills, immigration status, and many other factors.

Locked Out, David Bacon, 1999.

Challenges Keeping Newcomers in Working Poverty

In the U.S. labor market, post-secondary education or training is a prerequisite to most well-paid, career employment. Like native-born persons with very limited job qualifications, low-skill immigrants, particularly those without work authorization, often find themselves trapped in jobs with low wages, no benefits, and substandard work conditions. However, immigrants also face a set of unique factors, including immigration status, limited-English proficiency, non-transferable credentials, ineligibility for government benefits, workplace discrimination, and limited protection of workers' rights under current immigration and labor laws. This section discusses the issues and challenges that differentiate the needs of immigrants from other low-wage workers.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

Immigration status plays a central role in keeping many undocumented immigrants in poverty. Without legal status, they have little choice but to remain in jobs that pay minimum wage or below, have substandard working conditions, and offer few or no benefits such as health insurance or pensions. Often, these jobs are part-time or seasonal, forcing immigrants to string together several jobs at one time to support their families. A study in Chicago found that undocumented immigrants were more likely to be paid a lower wage (20-25 percent less than documented workers with identical qualifications), work in unsafe conditions, and experience forced overtime than documented immigrants.[45] Undocumented immigrants remain in substandard jobs because those who call attention to themselves risk deportation.

"Raj" and two other men came to the United States from India after being smuggled over the U.S.-Mexico border by their employer with the promise of education and support in starting a business. The reality was much different. The three men worked seven days a week, alternating 12-hour shifts. On their time off, they were forced to cook and clean for the employer's family and could not go to temple. The employer threatened that if the men didn't follow his orders, they would be reported to the INS. After staying with the employer for a number of years, Raj finally left and filed a wage-and-hour complaint with the California Labor Commissioner. He won the claim, and during the process of settling, the employer called the INS. Raj was promptly picked up and has been detained by INS for over one year.

Legal immigrants and naturalized citizens may also feel a sense of vulnerability that tempers their assertiveness in defending their rights or seeking workplace advancement. Some are reluctant to confront their employers out of concern that their actions might call INS attention to their undocumented co-workers, friends, or family members. When Chicago sweatshop workers were asked in a 2000 study why they stayed with their current employer, most workers answered that they simply needed the money and saw no other options.[46] In common with their native-born counterparts, working-poor immigrants generally have limited savings and must stay continuously employed to survive. However, unlike native-born workers, immigrants with restricted work authorization can either lose their employment visa or their ability to get a green card if they leave their current employer.

"Elena," an immigrant from Mexico, took a position as a packer in a large factory in Connecticut. After three years at the plant, Elena was approached by her immediate supervisor and told that her job was in jeopardy because the plant manager wanted to lay her off, but that he was able to prevent her layoff if she agrees to his demands for sexual favors. Elena

complied with his demands because her mother had just died and she was in need of funeral expenses, and because she needed to keep her job to get her immigration papers. When she finally complained to the plant manager, her supervisor was simply moved to another department, and her work environment continues to be unbearable. However, she is unable to work elsewhere until her employment papers are processed.

Immigrant workers have become even more vulnerable in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks. In November 2001, Congress enacted the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, which for the first time, required that airport screeners be U.S. citizens. Because of this new law, hundreds of Lawful Permanent Residents lost jobs they had held for years. In addition, the INS, in December 2001, launched "Operation Safe Travel" in which federal and local authorities staged raids on airports in 14 states to apprehend employees with false identification who work in secure areas. In Salt Lake City, for example, 69 workers from Central and South America were arrested.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

English proficiency is key to economic advancement and improved quality of life for immigrant workers and their families. According to the 2000 Census, almost 18 percent of persons in the United States over the age of five speak a language other than English at home, and almost eight percent have limited proficiency in English.[47] In addition, the school-age population of English-language learners (ELL) rose 46 percent to 3.5 million people, but only 42 percent of ELL students in middle school receive specialized language instruction.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	Numbers	Percent
Population 5 years and over	**254,746,174**	**100%**
English only	209,860,377	82.38%
Language other than English	**44,885,797**	**17.62%**
Speak English less than "very well"	19,492,832	7.65%
Spanish	**26,745,067**	**10.50%**
Speak English less than " well"	12,463,516	4.89%
Other Indo-European languages	**9,479,670**	**3.72%**
Speak English less than "very well"	3,103,665	1.22%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	**6,864,461**	**2.69%**
Speak English less than "very well"	3,395,653	1.33%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Studies have found that households headed by adults not proficient in English are significantly poorer than immigrant households overall. Immigrants and refugees who are fluent in oral and written English earn about 24 percent more than those who lack fluency, regardless of what qualifications they may have.[48]

Children of immigrants also struggle to learn English. Half of all ELL children attend schools in which a third or more of their fellow students are also ELL. This means that immigrant children are attending schools that are not only ethnically and economically segregated but linguistically isolated as well.[49]

Without opportunities to improve their English skills, immigrant workers—and their children—will remain trapped in working poverty.

CULTURAL BARRIERS

Immigrants' lack of familiarity with American culture and workplace presents yet another employment barrier. Immigrants often have limited information about the norms, expectations, nuances of interpersonal relations, and standard procedures and practices of American workplaces. Newcomers in the American workplace may lack familiarity in areas such as:

- How to search for work in the American labor market
- The mechanics of the job-application process
- How payroll systems work
- How American supervisors exercise their authority
- How problem-solving may differ between American and other cultures
- Workers' rights and responsibilities under U.S. law
- What behavior is considered polite or impolite in the American workplace

This lack of information can frequently slow or stall their job search, restrict them to a limited range of occupations or employers, and hamper their advancement beyond entry-level positions.

NON-TRANSFERABLE CREDENTIALS

Many U.S. employers have little experience evaluating overseas credentials and tend to discount them compared to equivalent education obtained in the United States. Consequently, some immigrants who are highly skilled face barriers to good jobs in their field because their work cre-

dentials are not recognized in this country. In such circumstances, English proficiency appears to increase employers' confidence in an immigrant's foreign education, enhancing the value of those credentials in the U.S. job market.[50]

Nevertheless, many highly skilled immigrants find themselves in minimum-wage jobs without benefits, often outside their field of expertise. Getting to a career position in the United States that is equal to that in their home country often requires years and takes a financial and emotional toll on the family.

"Sylvana" was chief of staff of the pediatric department of a hospital in Tirana, Albania. In addition to practicing medicine, she also taught at the local university and was a well-respected scholar. She fled Albania in 1998 during the Kosovo crisis and came to the United States with her husband and daughter. Her credentials as a doctor were not recognized in the United States, so she took a position as a translator at a local social service agency. She is currently in the process of obtaining her credentials but has to essentially repeat all of her schooling. First, she has to take three tests as part of the U.S. Medical Licensing Exam, which will take her about three years because she works full time. Sylvana must then practice as a resident for three years and may have to move away from her family. After her residency, she will be certified as a general practitioner. If she wants to return to pediatrics, she will have to wait two to three more years. In the meantime, she continues to work in a position that pays not much more than minimum wage.

LACK OF JOB-BASED BENEFITS

Wages are not the only element of compensation in which immigrants fare worse than native-born workers. For every dollar that the average employee in the U.S. private sector receives as wages, she or he earns an additional 38 cents in employer contributions to government social insurance programs (including Social Security and unemployment compensation), health insurance, pension programs, and leave time.[51] These fringe benefits form an important part of total household resources and help stabilize families. The working poor—both immigrants and natives—have significantly less chance of receiving these fringe benefits due to the nature of jobs these workers tend to hold, e.g., part time, temporary, seasonal, or off-the-books employment. Immigrant workers are the least likely to receive benefits than any other group of working-poor Americans. In 2000, for example, only 26 percent of immigrants had job-based health insurance, compared to 41.9 percent for native-born workers.[52]

LIMITED ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Many immigrant workers are not eligible for government-funded benefits due to their date of entry into the United States or their lack of legal status. This fact, along with lack of job-based benefits, increases the likelihood that they will be poorer than their U.S. citizen counterparts. Research shows that children of immigrants, although they may hold U.S. citizenship, are more likely to be disadvantaged than children of natives. They are more likely to be poor (24 percent versus 16 percent); more likely to be uninsured (22 percent versus 10 percent); more likely to have no usual source of medical care (14 percent versus 4 percent); and more likely not to have a steady source of food (37 percent versus 27 percent).[53]

Programs Funded under the Workforce Investment Act

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was created in 1998 to improve the skills and earnings of workers in the United States by coordinating the delivery of employment, education, and training programs. While all work-authorized immigrants are technically able to participate in WIA programs, the structure of WIA emphasizes a work-first approach and creates significant barriers to accessing education and training services. Many one-stop centers, therefore, place job seekers in the first-available job, rather than in education or training, even if the job does not provide good wages, benefits, or the possibility for advancement. Under this system, a limited-English job seeker wanting to learn new skills and English cannot use WIA resources unless they are unable to obtain or maintain employment.

*In 2001, the **D.C. Jobs Council**, a coalition that advocates for good jobs at decent wages, worked with 43 low-income job seekers, including immigrant and other limited-English-proficient job seekers, to evaluate the District's one-stop career centers. The Council's report,* "Help Wanted: Low-Income Job Seekers Assess the D.C. One-Stop Career Centers," *found that job seekers with language barriers received poor treatment and limited services–even at the one-stop center that was designated to provide bilingual services. Specifically, job seekers were told that if they couldn't speak English or weren't "legal," they couldn't receive services. Not one Latino job seeker received training. In response, the Council recommended an increase in bilingual staff, up-front assessment to determine job seekers' eligibility for services and employment needs, identification of the community's language needs, and staff training on the agency's language-access policy.*

Pushing one-stop centers to become more responsive to immigrants' unique challenges and provide needed training and education at the outset is a key strategy for improving long-term employment outcomes for immigrant workers through the WIA system. In addition, there is a need to educate policymakers and government administrators about the inaccessibility of WIA and other government-funded training programs for immigrants, as well as best practices for serving the training and education needs of this growing population.

Unemployment Insurance

The working poor, including immigrants, are more likely to be excluded from government assistance given the types of jobs they typically hold. Unemployment Insurance (UI), which partially replaces wages for workers during periods of unemployment, is an important example, particularly because only immigrants who are authorized to work are eligible for UI. In most states, work-history requirements have the effect of excluding part-time, temporary, and/or seasonal workers, who account for one fifth of all workers. Only 20 states grant UI eligibility to workers who work less than full time under various circumstances.[54] UI, therefore, provides a very limited safety net for immigrant and other low-wage workers who lose their jobs. Expanding UI eligibility or developing other safety-net options will be crucial to preventing low-wage immigrant families from sinking deeper into poverty.

Federal Health Care and Food Stamps

Federal law makes most immigrants of working age who arrived in the United States after 1996 ineligible for Food Stamps, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program during their first five years in this country. Even after five years, other program restrictions make it unlikely that an immigrant will be eligible. The law also affects U.S. citizen children in immigrant families because non-citizen family members often fear repercussions from the INS if the children use any benefits. For instance, the participation of citizen children in immigrant families in the Food Stamp program declined by 42 percent between 1994 and 1999.[55] Some states have filled in the gap left by the federal government and have used state funds for these populations, but oftentimes the coverage is either limited to certain groups or includes other restrictions. Restoring legal immigrants' access to federal health and food programs will expand support for low-wage immigrant workers whose jobs are unlikely to provide health benefits or family-sustaining wages.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is another critical program for low-income families. The EITC is a refundable tax credit that supplements wages and offsets taxes paid by low-income workers. In 1998, the EITC was responsible for lifting more children out of poverty than all other means-tested programs combined.[56] While this program would greatly benefit low-income immigrants, many are unaware of it. Of all low-income parents (those below 200 percent of the federal poverty level), 73.2 percent of native-born U.S. citizens had heard of the EITC, and 50.5 percent received it. In contrast, 21.6 percent of immigrants had heard of the EITC, and only 9.1 percent received it.[57] Outreach and education are clearly needed to increase immigrant families' utilization of this important income-support program.

Driver's Licenses

In many states, restrictions in driver's license eligibility requirements prevent many immigrants from legally driving to work. Some states do not grant licenses to people without Social Security numbers; some require that immigrants are lawfully present in the country; still others only accept a limited number of immigration documents to prove a person's identity. These policies prevent many immigrants —both documented and undocumented—from taking jobs that are not accessible by public transportation or that require a driver's license. Or they force immigrants who must drive for work to drive without a license and, therefore, without insurance, which compromises the safety of everyone on the road. As a result of the September 11th attacks, 50 new restrictive proposals were introduced. In 2002, eight states passed laws restricting immigrants' access to driver's licenses. Grassroots organizing efforts in immigrant communities across the United States will continue to advocate for immigrants' access to driver's licenses in ways that do not compromise national security.

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

Many U.S. employers treat immigrant workers fairly and comply with labor and immigration laws. Some employers, however, discriminate against them on the basis of national origin, immigration status, appearance, or accent. Although national origin charges officially made up only about 10 percent of all the discrimination claims received between 1992 and 2001,[58] the actual incidence of discrimination is likely higher due to underreporting, especially in today's post-September 11th environment.

Indeed, reports of workplace discrimination, particularly toward Arabs and Muslims, have soared since September 11, 2001. In the six months between September 2001 and April 2002, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) received three times the number of claims from Muslims that it received in the comparable period the previous year.[59] Increased discrimination is particularly acute in newer immigrant gateway communites across the country. Making matters worse, immigrant workers there must turn for help to organizations that lack experience with complicated legal issues.

In addition, complex federal employment verification systems, including three different pilot systems put in place in recent years, may lead to hiring preferences and discrimination against foreign-born workers. Employers, for instance, may wish to avoid time-consuming secondary verification and prescreen job applicants on the basis of citizenship or national origin. Moreover, these verification programs do not have effective measures in place to protect immigrant workers from discrimination. Monitoring the implementation of these verification systems will be needed to assess their impact on employment discrimination.

LIMITED LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR WORKERS

U.S. labor and employment laws cover workers regardless of immigration status. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) protects the right to organize in the workplace. The Fair Labor Standards Act mandates minimum wage and overtime payments. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on race, gender, religion, and national origin. The Occupational Safety and Health Act guarantees a safe and healthful workplace. Additionally, agricultural workers who are not covered by the NLRA have some protections under the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Protection Act.

However, U.S. labor laws are not well enforced and have many loopholes, resulting in widespread labor rights violations for immigrant and non-immigrant workers alike.[60] For example, NLRA's definition of "employer" makes it difficult to hold large employers who subcontract work accountable for working conditions. This allows employers, such as large food processors and growers, to claim that they are not employers of farm workers and pass that responsibility to labor contractors. In reality, these large employers, not the labor contractors, set wages and working conditions.[61]

Moreover, the types of jobs that immigrants tend to hold have few protections. Millions of workers—including farm workers, domestic workers, low-level supervisors, and "independent" contractors who, in reality, are dependent on a single employer–are excluded from labor laws meant to protect workers' organizing and bargaining rights. Migrant workers with temporary work visas, for example, "labor at the sufferance of growers who can fire them and have them deported if they try to form or join a union."[62]

Wage-and-Hour Violations

Under the Fair Labor Standard Act, employers must pay their employees at least the federal minimum wage. While wage-and-hour violations affect all workers, immigrants are particularly vulnerable because of their immigration status and/or language and cultural barriers. Sweatshops are the most well-known violators of wage-and-hour laws. As defined by DOL, sweatshops violate two or more federal or state labor laws governing minimum wages and overtime, child labor, industrial homework, occupational safety and health, workers' compensation, or similar matters. A DOL study estimated that nearly two thirds of garment manufacturers in New York City violate minimum-wage and overtime laws. A similar study of garment manufacturers in Los Angeles documented widespread non-compliance with labor, health, and safety laws.[63] Wage-and-hour violation, however, is not limited to sweatshops. It exists in almost all industries, including service, hospitality, and factories. The high incidence of wage-and-hour violations merits a greater amount of enforcement resources.

Abuse of Social Security Administration "No-Match" Letters

Employers are required to file wage and tax reports (W-2 forms) with the Social Security Administration (SSA) each year to credit workers for wages earned. Every January, SSA sends "no-match" letters to employees and employers when the names or Social Security Numbers (SSN) listed on the employer's W-2 forms do not match SSA's records. In 2002, SSA sent out a staggering 800,000 no-match letters, in contrast to about 110,000 letters in 2001 and 40,000 letters annually in prior years.

A large proportion of the employers who receive no-match letters employ low-wage immigrant workers. There are many reasons for an SSN mismatch, including the misspelling of names and name changes. Although receipt of a no-match letter is not a legal basis for firing a worker, as the letter itself states, employers—either deliberately or through ignorance—use the letters to terminate, threaten, or otherwise harass their employees. The expansion of the SSA No-Match Program in January 2002 led a number of

Violation of Workers' Rights Is Prevalent in the Poultry-Processing Industry

Few jobs in America today are as hard, dirty, dangerous, and poorly paid as production work in the 174 major poultry processing plants scattered across the United States, especially the rural South.

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice pressed the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to examine workers' rights violations in the poultry-processing industry. DOL's 2000 survey of 51 of these plants revealed widespread violations of federal worker protection laws, including the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act.

The government inspectors found:

100% of plants failed to keep accurate records of hours worked and wages due. In the absence of accurate records, workers were either not paid for hours worked or were paid at regular wage rates when they were entitled to overtime rates.

100% of plants did not pay employees for time spent at the beginning of the day, at meal breaks, and at the end of the day putting on, taking off, and sanitizing required gear and equipment.

70% of plants transported workers in unsafe vehicles, uninsured vehicles, or vehicles with unlicensed drivers.

65% of plants misclassified their employees as exempt from the minimum-wage and overtime provisions of federal law.

40% of plants used unregistered labor contractors.

35% of plants made impermissible deductions from wages. Employers charged workers for protective equipment, such as earplugs for sound protection, that they must provide for free under the Occupational and Safety and Health Act.

20% of plants violated safety and health standards in employer-provided housing.

8% of plants violated child labor laws, employing workers under 18 in hazardous conditions, and allowing workers under 16 to work an excessive number of hours.

Adapted from "Poultry Processing Compliance Survey Fact Sheet." U.S. Department of Labor, Wages and Hours Division. 2001.

employers to believe that the program was created in response to the September 11th attacks as a means to catch undocumented immigrants.

Implementation of the online Social Security Number Verification Service (SSNVS), which allows employers to correct wage-reporting information, will likely exacerbate already existing employer abuse of employee information and increase the vulnerability of immigrant workers. For example, an employer could use the SSNVS to prescreen potential new hires or to retaliate against workers who engage in organizing activities.

The misuse of no-match letters and the SSNVS system can have a devastating impact for immigrant workers. Community organizations across the country, however, are working to protect workers' rights on these two issues with promising results. Some are also working to educate employers about the purpose of the letters and push them to conduct due-diligence follow-up to prevent illegal firings and employment discrimination of immigrants with proper work authorization.

*Shortly after the Social Security Administration (SSA) mailed the SSN No-Match letters, **Erie Neighborhood House** began to receive calls from immigrants reporting that their employer had threatened to fire them because the employer believed that a no-match letter was an indication that these workers don't have authorization to work. Specifically, one worker was given only a few days to demonstrate that his Social Security Number (SSN) was valid. When he was unable to meet the deadline, he was promptly fired. The man has cancer and lost his health insurance with his job. Given his date of entry into the United States, he is ineligible for government-funded health care.*

In response, Erie Neighborhood House, in collaboration with the Legal Assistance Foundation, created an education packet for employers about the purpose of the no-match letters and the rights of employees. The agency also placed a story on the local Spanish-language television station to inform the broader immigrant public. Television coverage resulted in inquiries from more than 10,000 Latino immigrants living in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana who had been fired because of the no-match letter.

Erie Neighborhood House organized a protest that resulted in a community meeting with the SSA Commissioner. Using the Spanish media to publicize this meeting, the agency mobilized between 500 and 700 workers to meet with the Commissioner. The Commissioner agreed to conduct outreach to employers and the community about the purpose of the no-match letter and that it is not a legal basis for firing

workers who receive the no-match letter. Erie Neighborhood House is currently advocating with the Commissioner to bring concerns about the no-match letters to the national level. Coverage of its campaign had led national organizations, including ACORN and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, to spread these campaigns across the country.

Immigrant Workers Face Unique Vulnerability to Intimidation and Exploitation

Although native-born workers are also subject to intimidation and exploitation, immigration status and cultural and linguistic isolation magnify immigrants' vulnerability.

Unscrupulous employers often use the "employer sanctions" law to intimidate or retaliate against workers who voice objection to their working conditions or who participate in union-organizing drives. The intent of the employer-sanctions law is to prevent undocumented workers from coming to the United States for employment by placing the burden on the employer to ensure that each employee has valid work authorization. However, unscrupulous employers have used this law to discriminate against, intimidate, and/or exploit undocumented workers.

- Only six percent of immigrants who worked in unsafe conditions reported their situation to a government agency.
- 32 percent thought that their employer would punish them for reporting an unsafe condition.
- 30 percent thought that they would be deported for reporting an unsafe condition.

Source: Mehta, Chirag et al. *Chicago's Undocumented Immigrants. An Analysis of Wages, Working Conditions and Economic Contributions.* University of Illinois at Chicago, Center for Urban Economic Development. February 2002.

Fear of deportation is a major deterrent preventing immigrant workers from filing a labor complaint. The Department of Labor (DOL) and the INS have a memorandum of understanding that DOL will not share information about the status of workers when it is involved in a labor complaint. However, when DOL initiates its own investigation and discovers undocumented workers at the worksite, it can share this information with INS. INS also has an internal policy guidance that governs how the agency will respond when it receives anonymous tips regarding undocumented workers. Before conducting a workplace raid, the agency is required to ask questions to ascertain if the tip is a form of retaliation against workers. However, this policy is not uniformly followed at each district office, and the guidance gives the director of the local office discretion to decide whether to proceed with a workplace raid.

The Power of Worker Organizing

Hotel Housekeepers

In 1999, hotel housekeepers at the Holiday Inn Express in Minneapolis, Minnesota—members of the ***Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees' Union (HERE), Local 17*** —were preparing for contract negotiations. Management was intent on breaking the union and called in the INS, which promptly arrested eight members of the union's negotiating team. Almost 70 percent of the workers at the Holiday Inn are Latina, and all eight of those who were arrested were undocumented. The union local posted bail and filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB); other unions, religious groups, lawyers, and concerned citizens rallied community support. Ultimately, the NLRB and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) ruled that the immigrants had been illegally discriminated against because of their union activity. Each worker won a settlement of $8,000. Seven of the eight workers were granted a two-year reprieve against deportation. None of them were reinstated in their jobs. Leaders of Local 17, however, report that relations with management are much improved, and that most housekeepers at the Inn now earn $10-11 dollars an hour, plus a full set of benefits, including free health and dental care.

Justice for Janitors

The janitorial industry's new reality, as described in the Wall Street Journal (April 4, 2001), is "a work force increasingly composed of immigrants toiling for huge contractors that clean buildings owned or managed by multinational corporations." In April 2001, the ***Justice for Janitors*** campaign, sponsored by the ***Service Employees International Union (SEIU)***, launched its East Coast campaign to improve wages and benefits for 20,000 janitors. In Los Angeles, a year earlier, janitors —with tremendous community support—won a 26 percent wage increase over three years, along with family health coverage, paid sick days, and paid vacation days. Wage increases and similar benefits have been won in Stamford, northern New Jersey, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston. Some of these collective-bargaining agreements include free ESL classes, computer and Internet training, and GED classes. All of these campaigns had significant community support. In addition, immigrant workers—many of them undocumented—played a leadership role, despite enormous risks to themselves and their families. Four leaders of the Los Angeles campaign were among the first recipients of the Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World Award in 2001.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Immigrant workers who participate in union organizing frequently confront employer intimidation tactics, including illegal firings and reporting undocumented workers to the INS. The recent Supreme Court decision in *Hoffman Plastic Compounds v. NLRB*, which denies back pay to undocumented workers illegally fired for participating in a union-organizing drive, makes the problem even more severe. Although the Hoffman decision concerned only the NLRA's back-pay remedy, employers are seeking to extend the decision to other employment laws and remedies, further eroding labor and employment law protections and the ability of undocumented immigrants to protect their workplace rights.

RESOURCE

Despite the Hoffman decision, state agencies have many options for enforcing labor rights for all workers, regardless of immigration status. Shortly after the Hoffman decision, state agencies in California and Washington adopted policies affirming workers' rights without regard to immigration status. Such policies can cover the areas of anti-discrimination, wage and hour, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation.

For information on model state policies and legislation, see Smith, Rebecca. *Low Pay, High Risks: State Models for Advancing Immigrant Workers' Rights.* National Employment Law Project. 2003. **www.nelp.org.**

In this policy environment, immigrant workers will be less willing to file complaints about unfair practices or participate in union-organizing activities. However, when immigrant workers do decide to come forward and file a complaint, finding legal counsel may be difficult. Legal service providers who receive funding from the Legal Services Corporation, for example, cannot represent undocumented workers. Although a number of organizations have emerged to fill this gap, immigrants in states with newer immigrant populations and limited resources have fared poorly. Even large immigrant states lack the resources to fill the demand. Increasing the availability of free and low-cost legal services to immigrant workers is an important strategy for addressing workplace discrimination, intimidation, retaliation, and exploitation.

Learning English, David Bacon, 1996.

Innovative Approaches to Address the Challenges

Helping immigrants achieve better employment outcomes will require substantial human-capital investment, given limitations in areas such as education, marketable skills, English-language competency, and understanding of cultural and workplace norms. Innovative workforce development programs, community organizing, union organizing, policy advocacy, and litigation all play a crucial role in addressing this formidable challenge. This section highlights promising and proven strategies that grantmakers, as well as public-sector funders, might consider supporting. It also calls attention to systemic changes needed to improve long-term employment opportunities and economic security for immigrants and their families.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Community organizations, public-interest groups, unions, employers, and government agencies have developed creative programs to meet the workforce development needs of immigrant workers, including those who are "limited English proficient" (LEP). Although emanating from different sectors and implemented at varying scales, these workforce development models all offer valuable insight on what it takes to successfully meet the specific needs and challenges of immigrant workers and improve their long-term employment prospects and outcomes. Programs are most effective when they integrate skills training and language and literacy acquisition, work with employers to assist in meeting the needs of immigrant workers, educate immigrant workers about cultural and workplace norms, and target sectors that offer advancement opportunities.

Integrated Skills Training, Language Acquisition, and Cultural Orientation

Although job prospects and wages substantially increase with improved English proficiency, immigrants often do not have the time to learn English because they are working to support their families here and often in the country of origin. Focus groups with LEP adults from multiple communities indicate a strong interest in learning English while acquiring job skills or work-related vocabulary.[64] Combining English acquisition with job training allows LEP adults to apply newly learned language skills in work settings and provide motivation. The goals are to learn English and obtain job skills. Few programs around the country combine language and skills training. There is a great need for both research and support of these programs.

> *Working with the public workforce system, unions, manufacturers, and educators, the **HIRE Center** in Milwaukee is a retraining and reemployment center for dislocated workers. It was developed with support from the **Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation,** and the **Discount Foundation,** among others. HIRE operates the Milwaukee Tech Track Project, targeting Spanish-speaking workers for jobs in computer numerically controlled machining (CNC) and Industrial Maintenance Mechanics (IMM). The 16-week bilingual curriculum provides skills instruction in Spanish and teaches vocational English to help workers succeed on the job. Eighty-seven percent of those enrolled completed the course. Ninety-one percent of those who completed training entered employment, with 91 percent still employed 90 days after hire. Workers placed in CNC jobs made an average of $10.53 an hour. Those in IMM jobs made an average of $11.77 an hour.*

According to the Workforce Investment San Francisco Board, employers will rarely have an incentive to invest in basic skills, such as reading and English proficiency, which are highly portable.[65] Where employer incentives cannot be created to provide training, the public and nonprofit sectors play a crucial role. The VESL Immersion Program (VIP) —a collaboration among the City of San Francisco Department of Human Services, the Private Industry Council, Catholic Charities, Arriba Juntos, and the City College of San Francisco—is one successful model for providing vocational ESL (VESL) training.

Workforce Development Partnership: Models That Work

Collaborative Partnerships: A Win-Win Strategy for All

California's San Joaquin Valley supports a multi-billion dollar agricultural industry that generates 400,000 jobs. But wages are low, and earnings are further depressed because the jobs are seasonal. Three-quarters of the workers are immigrants, mainly from Mexico, and many have a sixth-grade education at best, making language and skills training a critical need.

In response to the lack of publicly funded training programs for farmworkers, the **Farmworkers Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD)** has developed innovative programs to meet this gap. Its mission is to improve the economic and social prosperity of monolingual Spanish-speaking workers and families and strengthen the agricultural sector.

In 1996, the first labor-management alliance was launched with Bear Creek Roses, training 1,500 workers in communication and conflict resolution skills. Within two years, the alliance produced concrete results. Yields on premium roses increased 54 percent. And workdays lost to injury dropped 800 percent. For workers, average hourly earnings increased six percent, and piece-rate earnings jumped 44 percent. Paid holidays also doubled, and medical plan contributions increased 50 percent. Yet the company saw its cost of hourly labor as a percent of total enterprise fall three percent per year for three years.

Building on that record, FIELD is currently working with businesses, government agencies, and community institutions as part of a 40-member alliance that is refining and implementing a strategy of cross-training farmworkers in counter-season crops and improving management-labor alliances. Designed with input from businesses and workers alike, the comprehensive training curriculum includes VESL, team-building, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Programs range from 40 to 120 hours and run from 5 to 10 weeks. In 2002, FIELD trained 1,420 workers and established labor-management alliances with seven companies.

These efforts offer solid proof that investing in worker training and collaborative partnerships is a win-win strategy for all.

Employer Investment in Worker Training Pays Off

In spring 2002, **Pferd Milwaukee Brush (PMB)**, a manufacturing company in Milwaukee, decided to adopt a different approach to address its financial and union-management woes. Working closely with the **United Steel-workers of America (USWA)** and the **Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP)**,* PMB formed a leadership team, comprising representatives from executive management and union leadership, to discuss and make decisions about key workplace issues. The leadership team holds weekly meetings, facilitated by WRTP staff using consensus techniques to guide the process.

PMB's workforce is highly diverse. More than 35 percent of the workers are Hmong and Laotian, and a significant number are Russian, Vietnamese, and Latino immigrants. Viewing these workers as assets to the company, the leadership team made strengthening their skills—and surmounting linguistic and cultural barriers—one of its top priorities. In partnership with USWA, WRTP, and the State of Wisconsin, PMB made available an eight-week training course to improve English, literacy, and math skills for its Hmong and Laotian workers. It also provided vocational language training through a community-based organization serving this population. Not only did PMB make these training opportunities available, the company paid its workers for attending classes.

The PMB leadership team is now developing additional initiatives for other immigrant workers, often engaging these workers in identifying skills needs and developing the training classes. PMB's investment in worker training is already paying off. The company has enhanced its employee relations, improved the skills of its workers, and put in place a process to bring about lasting workplace changes. The results: increased worker productivity, a growing customer base, and a rosier bottom line. Strategic employer investment in immigrant workforce development reaps benefits for both workers and businesses.

** Dedicated to building meaningful partnerships among business, labor, and community-based organizations, WRTP is an association of over 100 employers and unions working to improve access to quality jobs for the low-income, unemployed, and immigrant workers of Wisconsin.*

Cooking up Careers in Las Vegas

Local 226 of the **Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE)**, known locally as the "Culinary," insists that hotel and restaurant jobs don't have to be dead-end, low-paying jobs with no benefits. The union represents about 45,000 members in Las Vegas, including housekeepers, cooks, dishwashers, waiters, bellhops, porters, and casino changemakers. Most of these workers are immigrants. The union's staff reflects the membership: 50 percent are Latino, compared to 1987, when only one staff person spoke Spanish.

In 1993, the union's clout at the bargaining table led to a landmark agreement: 24 hotels in Las Vegas agreed to provide funding (two cents for every hour worked by union members in union hotels) to support the **Culinary and Hospitality Training Academy**, jointly governed by union and management representatives. Today, the Academy provides entry-level and skill-upgrade training for as many as 3,000 workers a year. The vast majority of them are immigrants from Mexico and Central America but also significant numbers of refugees who are referred by faith-based resettlement agencies. The tuition-free training covers a broad range of occupations, from housekeeping and kitchen positions to food and beverage service. Career ladders are an essential ingredient of the program's success. Over time, dishwashers can train up the ladder to become *sous chefs*, for example.

Since its inception, the Academy has served over 20,000 individuals with an 80 percent placement rate. New graduates generally land jobs in unionized hotels paying $11 to $12 per hour with full health care, paid vacations, sick days, and pensions. Housekeepers with little formal education, for example, can and do own their own homes.

In return for this access to "the American Dream," the Culinary encourages members to be active participants both in the workplace and in community life. Along with UNITE, a union organizing industrial laundry workers in Las Vegas, the Culinary started the Immigrant Workers Citizenship Project, a non-profit that helps immigrants become U.S. citizens.

The VESL Immersion Program (VIP) helps LEP welfare recipients improve vocational English through intensive vocational and workplace language immersion. The program generally teaches soft skills—such as job search, interview skills, and how to present oneself to an employer—and focuses on speaking and comprehension. Participants can either enroll in a "core" program, which is 30 hours per week; a "modified" program, which is 20 hours per week; or a "part-time" program, which is 10 hours per week. Each program includes case management with a case specialist who monitors participants' progress and helps with job placement. In 2002, 93 percent of the 165 enrollees completed the program. Graduates from the "part-time" program earned an average wage of $7.31 per hour, while "modified program" and "core program" graduates earned an average of $10.35 per hour.

Partnerships among Labor, Business, and Community

Unions, businesses, and community groups in at least a dozen cities around the country have established "high-road partnerships" to provide entry-level jobs and upgrade training programs in targeted industries. Business involvement informs the development of training programs, so that they focus on building skills that employers need. It also means that workers are placed in waiting jobs at the end of training. Union involvement brings in-depth knowledge of what skills are needed for particular jobs, a mentoring system within the workplace, and the potential to replicate programs within union structures from one city or region to another. Community involvement allows programs to benefit from on-the-ground experience, reach deeper into disadvantaged communities, and help build trust among the partners. Some of these workforce development partnerships also engage government agencies and community institutions, such as community colleges. More and more of these programs are focusing on the needs of immigrant workers.

WORKER OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND ORGANIZING

Outreach, education, and organizing campaigns can empower immigrant workers to protect their rights, improve their working conditions, and enhance their earnings and benefits. The most effective campaigns take time to build trust with immigrant communities, particularly those with a significant number of undocumented immigrants. They are also led by immigrant workers themselves and involve community organizations, faith-based groups, unions, and worker centers. And they focus on strategies that work best to meet the unique needs of particular immigrant communities.

SEIU Local 1877 at USC, David Bacon, 1997.

The Garment Worker Center[96]

*Los Angeles is the garment capital of the United States, employing 140,000 workers who are predominantly immigrants. The majority work in unsanitary and dangerous conditions and without minimum wage or overtime pay. **The Garment Worker Center**, located in the heart of the garment district, offers educational workshops, leadership development, and assistance with workplace issues. It also works in coalition with other low-wage worker organizations. Using a peer-learning model, ongoing workshops focus on topics such as wage-and-hour issues and occupational health and safety. Workers also organize their peers and use direct-action campaigns, e.g., picketing and boycotts, to win unpaid wages from exploitative employers. Since its founding in 2000, the Center, whose annual budget is less than $150,000, has won more than $1 million in back wages and penalties for over 100 workers.*

Organizing Immigrant Meatpackers: A Labor-Community Collaboration[97]

*In June 2000, **Omaha Together/One Community (OTOC)**, a 40-member congregation-based affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), decided to initiate an unusual partnership with the **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)**. Together, they launched a campaign to help workers in the meatpacking industry organize a union to win better wages and safer working conditions. The predominantly Latino workforce endured hazardous line speed, high injury rates, wage-and-hour violations, and illegal firings. But merging two very different organizing cultures wasn't easy, and management intimidation was highly effective. Consequently, the first two campaigns failed.*

However, OTOC and UFCW learned from each other's methods and mistakes. They formed strong core committees. They held one-on-one meetings with workers to identify potential leaders and provided those leaders with training to organize other workers and identify more leaders. The workers also created a newsletter to update OTOC congregations about their efforts and educated local businesses about the benefits of raising wages at unionized plants, including the increase in disposable income.

In January 2002, the election results at Nebraska Beef were overturned, with the NLRB ruling that management had blatantly violated U.S. labor laws. A new election was ordered. In the second election, with tremendous community support, the workers voted two to one in favor of unionizing. The campaign continues at other plants to win concrete gains at the bargaining table.

Foundations and Unions

Increasingly, foundations and unions, particularly those organizing workers in low-wage sectors, are joining forces. Unions bring to the table a national infrastructure, financial resources, political clout on policy issues, seasoned organizers and research staff, and the ability to effect change on a national scale. Foundations can fund 501(c)(3) activities that increase community support for workplace organizing, research on policy issues, model workforce development programs, among others. Grants can be made to non-profit organizations directly affiliated with unions, to community organizations with strong ties to labor, and—with the exercise of expenditure responsibility–directly to unions themselves.

For more information on union-related programs, contact Susan Chinn (schinn@comcast.net) or Regina McGraw (reginamc@corecomm.net), Co-Chairs of the **Neighborhood Funders Group Working Group on Labor and Community** (www.nfg.org). 1

SAMPLE GRANTS:

Ford Foundation
National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
General support for the Committee's work to strengthen the religious community's involvement in low-wage worker struggles.

The Joyce Foundation
AFL-CIO Working for America Institute
For research on innovative models of bilingual training for immigrant workers in the construction, manufacturing and hospitality industries.

The Nathan Cummings Foundation
American Institute for Social Justice
To support the collaborative efforts of ACORN and the Service Employees International Union to develop a broad-based, community-labor coalition to improve the quality of life of low- to moderate-income Florida residents, including improving access to healthcare.

The Rockefeller Foundation
Jobs with Justice Education Fund
To strengthen local coalitions within a national network of community, faith-based, labor, and student organizations working for economic justice and workers' rights.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
To develop replicable models of health-insurance coverage for uninsured home-care workers and their families.

Union Campaigns

Despite declining rates of unionization in the private sector of the economy, major organizing drives are now underway in sectors that employ large numbers of immigrant workers. These campaigns involve nursing-home workers, home-care workers, janitors, industrial laundry and garment workers, hotel and restaurant workers, roofers, asbestos-removal workers, meatpackers, farmworkers, and many others eager to win better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

The wage differential between union and non-union workers is substantial. In 2001, union workers earned 11.5 percent higher wages than non-union workers who are otherwise comparable in experience, education, region, industry, occupation, and marital status. For Latino men, the differential between union and non-union workers was 16 percent, and for Latina women, 12.8 percent.[68] In specific industries, especially those with a high proportion of immigrant workers, the union premium is even more dramatic. A recent study of median hourly wages in the hotel industry in 2000, for example, showed that unionized hotel workers earn, in wages alone, 17.6 percent more than non-union workers. And foreign-born unionized workers earn 29.6 percent more than their non-union counterparts.[69]

This wage differential, known as the *union premium*, is significantly larger when total compensation, including health insurance and pension benefits, is taken into account. For example, in the retail food industry, 72 percent of union workers in firms with 100 or more employees have health insurance through their employer or union, compared to only 45.4 percent of non-union workers in the similar firms. And 60.4 percent of union members participate in employment-based pension plans, compared to only 35.4 percent for non-union workers.[70]

Increased organizing activity among immigrant workers has underscored the need for community support to protect these workers from employer intimidation and the role of community- and faith-based organizations in helping connect workers to unions. As a result, foundations have begun to play a significant role in supporting the involvement of students, faith-based organizations, and community groups in efforts to support workers seeking to unionize.

*In June of 1999, 240 workers at Up-to-Date Laundry, the largest industrial laundry in the Baltimore-Washington area, took a vote on whether to join a union. Nearly one fifth of the plant's predominantly African-American workforce had been fired during the organizing drive, which was defeated by a two-vote margin. **UNITE!**, a national union of garment and textile workers, filed charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board, which ordered a re-run election and granted the union unprecedented remedies. But the company had begun hiring immigrant workers—many of them undocumented, most of them Latinos living in Langley Park, a suburb of Washington, D.C. As another organizing drive gathered steam, 25 immigrant workers were unlawfully fired in June of 2000. This time, the union turned to a community organization, with deep roots in the Langley Park area, for help in countering the employer's intimidation tactics. **CASA de Maryland** provided a safe place for meetings, translators, and assistance in finding temporary jobs for fired workers. Together, union and CASA organizers went door-to-door in the community, building support for what would become a nine-week strike. In 2001, the workers won a historic three-year contract, which included a 60 percent wage increase, sick days, paid holidays, a retirement plan, and—of great importance—a grievance and arbitration system to challenge unfair discipline and discharges.*

Worker Centers

Worker centers are intermediary organizations that represent new immigrants and low-wage workers, helping them negotiate the workplace, labor market, political arena, and the larger society. These centers often provide services such as job placement, legal representation, language classes, health services, and advocacy. They are also gathering places for immigrant communities to socialize, celebrate, and bring about social change. Worker centers take many different forms, from a standard office to a parking lot or even a bus stop. They may attract workers from a particular occupation or industry (e.g., day laborers and garment workers) or from a particular ethnic group. Some have formal or informal ties with local unions. As the need for services and advocacy grows, more and more organizations —including religious groups, labor unions, community groups—are considering starting new worker centers in cities and towns across the country. Many foundations, along with city and county governments, support worker centers as a strategy to meet the needs of low-wage workers.

***The Oscar Romero Day Labor Center** opened in Houston, Texas in 2001 after seven years of organizing workers in a parking lot and placing them in construction and landscaping jobs. In addition to addressing residents' complaints about workers' presence on the streets, the new site provides a humane facility where workers can gather, be matched with employers in an orderly fashion, and learn technical skills, English, and workplace rights. Approximately 250 to 300 workers are placed each day.*

RESOURCE

Contact the **Neighborhood Funders Group Working Group on Labor and Community** for a copy of its 2003 study on worker centers.

POLICY-ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Policy-advocacy campaigns can often result in federal, state, or local laws that strengthen or expand existing protections for workers. Such campaigns can focus on a range of policy issues from living wages at the local level to legalization at the federal level. The most successful campaigns bring immigrants and native-born workers together, include them at all levels of advocacy, and allow them to share their experiences with policymakers, the community, and the media. They also include strategic allies, such as labor unions, religious institutions, and business interests.

*Thanks to advocacy by the **Merrimack Valley Project** and its leadership of temporary workers and day laborers, Massachusetts recently passed a law that limits the amount of fees that temporary employees may be charged for transportation to and from their workplaces. The new law states that any employer offering temporary workers transportation to the work site for a certain fee can charge only the actual transportation cost or three percent of a worker's daily wages, whichever is less. The fee also may not reduce the worker's daily wages below the minimum wage. Most importantly, if a worker is required to use the transportation services, the new law prohibits the employer or contractor from charging any fee. Finally, the law requires a staffing agency, work-site employer, or anyone acting on their behalf to obtain written authorization from a worker before deducting any transportation fees from his or her wages.*

*In fall 2001, California Governor Gray Davis signed the "Displaced Janitors Opportunity Act." Before the Act was passed, nonunion cleaning firms would underbid companies that pay union wages, and janitors would lose their jobs when building managers switched contracts. Many of the janitors were Latino immigrants who could not afford the lost wages while searching for another job. **SEIU Local 1877's Political Action Committee** organized immigrant janitors across California to call upon the state legislature to enact protections. Janitors received training on the issue, educated their legislators, and held rallies. The law, which passed as a result of their advocacy, requires janitorial contractors and subcontractors that secure a new building service contract to continue employing the janitors of the former contractor or subcontractor for at least 60 days. At the end of the 60 days, the new contractor is required to provide a written evaluation of each janitor's job performance and to continue employing janitors whose performance has been satisfactory.*[71]

Living-Wage Campaigns

Living-wage campaigns have become part of an emerging grassroots response to the rising economic inequality across the nation. By the end of 2002, 82 municipalities had passed living-wage ordinances, and more than 70 others are poised to do the same. The involvement and leadership of workers, unions, clergy, and the broader community—along with experienced bilingual and bicultural organizers—played a critical role in the success of these campaigns.

Alexandria Virginia is the sixteenth-richest city in the country, where 20 percent of households earn over $100,000, but one out of five children lives in poverty.[72] *Many Latino and Ethiopian immigrants fill jobs with wages so low that they must work second and third jobs to support their families. Mussie Habetezion, for example, worked as a parking lot attendant and earned $7 per hour.*[73] *After working a full shift at the parking lot, he then worked an eight-hour overnight shift at 7-11.*

*To address the wage disparities in Alexandria, the **Tenant and Workers' Support Committee (TWRC)** began a campaign in 1998 to pass a living-wage ordinance that would require city contractors, such as parking lot operators who mainly employ Ethiopian immigrants, to pay at least $9.84 per hour. TWRC developed a broad coalition of immigrants, unions, community groups, and religious congregations and organized marches, demonstrations, postcard campaigns, call-in days, and petitions targeting the Alexandria City Council. A part-time organizer focused on outreach to im-migrants. In the beginning, she went door to door in apartment complexes, talking to people about the importance of supporting the workers. She eventually brought enough people together to form a committee to ensure that immigrants were represented at all events. People who had never participated in an event before, along with some who couldn't read and write, stood up in front of large crowds to tell their story.*

In summer 2000, the Council voted 6-0 to pass the living-wage ordinance at $10 per hour, which brought over $4 million in additional wages to workers. This grassroots coalition was so strong that attempts by the legislature and business community to overturn the ordinance were thwarted. The campaign also resulted in the creation of "Jobs with Justice," a coalition which has gone on to support a campaign to improve the conditions of family childcare workers.

RESEARCH

Research designed to inform and shape the development of programs and policies can be an effective tool to improve employment outcomes for working-poor immigrants. Solid research findings and recommendations can galvanize workers and communities to organize campaigns for policy change. Such campaigns can draw the attention of the media, policymakers, and business and civic leaders—and achieve important outcomes for low-wage workers.

Founded in 1993 to reduce working poverty, the ***Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)*** *uses research to understand the impact of government policies, employer practices, and socioeconomic conditions on the working poor in Los Angeles County. LAANE has released three major studies, including reports on the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, the Mayor's Business Team, and working poverty in Los Angeles. In addition to providing invaluable information to activists, lawmakers, academics, and the general public, these studies also influenced public debates and led to important changes in city policy regarding public subsidies and job creation. In 2001, as part of the* ***Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice****, LAANE helped negotiate a landmark Community Benefits Package with the developer of the huge Staples Center expansion project. The benefits package includes provisions for living-wage jobs, affordable housing, local hiring, and green space. It is the first agreement of its kind in the country, establishing a new model for development that responds to the needs of workers and communities.*

Some community and advocacy groups, like LAANE, have in-house research capacity. Groups without such capacity often produce action-oriented studies in collaboration with think tanks, research institutes, or academic researchers, some of whom are affiliated with university-based labor centers. Such collaborative endeavors leverage the resources, connections, and credibility of larger institutions. They also ground the research in real-life issues affecting low-wage workers and provide a natural tie-in to public-education and policy-advocacy campaigns needed to push for implementation of the recommendations.

LEGAL STRATEGIES

In some cases, countering egregious, pervasive, and persistent violations of workers' rights may require legal action when employers or government agencies are unresponsive to advocacy. Successful litigation can often redress wrongful treatment and set a precedent for broader protection of workers' rights.

Garment Workers in San Francisco[74]

In the spring and summer of 2001, over 240 garment workers, mostly monolingual Chinese immigrant women, labored for months without pay and were owed over $1 million in back wages. They were employed by three related factories in San Francisco: Wins of California, Win Fashion, and Win Industries of America.

In July 2001, Win Fashion closed its doors, filing for bankruptcy and laying off all its workers. In August 2001, the California Labor Commissioner shut down the other two factories for operating illegally, without a license. That same month, Wins of California, the largest factory, declared bankruptcy, leaving the workers in a complex legal battle for their back wages.

A network of community organizations including the Asian Law Caucus, Sweatshop Watch, the Women's Employment Rights Clinic of Golden Gate University School of Law, and the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) joined forces to help the workers win back pay. Convincing the workers to file claims and join a lawsuit proved to be an uphill proposition. Fearing their former employer, many workers were hesitant to come forward.

CPA, with funding from the Rosenberg Foundation, hired a bilingual, bicultural organizer to address workers' concerns, assist them in filing back-pay claims, and mount a public education campaign. With support from the community groups, the workers developed the skills and confidence to speak to the media and hold protest rallies. Their activism played a pivotal role in garnering broad political and public support and significant donations from individual donors.

As a result of this multi-faceted campaign that combined litigation, community organizing, leadership development, and media outreach, the former Wins workers, in October 2002, were awarded nearly $1 million in back pay through a special fund administered by the State Labor Commissioner. The workers and their supporters have continued to push government agencies to prosecute the former owners on civil and criminal charges. Some of the workers are also active with the newly created worker center operated by CPA, engaging in outreach, education, and organizing to strengthen enforcement of wage-and-hour law and improve immigrant workers' access to services, job training, and stable employment.

Poultry Workers in the Southeast

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) *union became aware that workers in poultry plants in the Southeast, almost 100 percent of whom are Latino, were not paid for some of the time worked. Initially, UFCW advocated with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to investigate this practice, and upon investigation DOL found egregious abuse of wage-and-hour law. However, the poultry companies, including Perdue and Tyson, did not change their practices and continued to not compensate workers for time spent taking on and off required work clothing and sanitizing the plant. Perdue's actions resulted in not only cuts in workers' paychecks, but also a reduction in retirement benefits. In 1999, UFCW helped Perdue workers file a lawsuit against the company for unpaid wages. The case, settled by DOL in May 2002, provided ten million dollars in back pay to 25,000 workers. It will also result in an increase of approximately $10-15 million in workers' paychecks each year.*

Recommendations to Funders

Grantmakers—whether funding locally, regionally, or nationally—can play a strategic role to improve working conditions, strengthen workplace rights, and expand employment opportunities for low-wage immigrant workers in ways that improve economic security for all low-income groups. Funders wishing to further explore ideas in these recommendations are encouraged to consult the resources highlighted throughout this report or contact GCIR and the NFG Working Group on Labor and Community.

1. Support efforts to enhance language access to welfare-to-work programs and increase the availability of ESL classes. Lack of English skills limits immigrants' access to welfare-to-work programs and, ultimately, to better-paying jobs. Funders can support advocacy efforts to ensure language access to welfare-to-work and other government programs designed to assist low-wage workers improve their job prospects and protect their workplace rights.

For immigrant adults, the demand for ESL instruction has far outstripped the supply. More classes, more-flexible schedules, better-trained teachers, and better use of technology are needed to meet this high demand. For immigrant children, school systems need to improve and expand their efforts to meet the educational needs of English-language learners.

2. Invest in comprehensive workforce development programs. The best programs integrate job training (both hard and soft skills), English-language acquisition, and cultural orientation.

3. Target workforce development programs that forge multi-sector partnerships among employers, unions, community groups, faith-based organizations, and government. These programs can yield significant impact and have greater potential for sustainability. Foundations can make grants to evaluate, document, and replicate such programs to expand the availability of training and placement opportunities that truly help immigrant workers secure family-sustaining jobs.

4. Support programs that help immigrants gain fair recognition and receive accreditation for the skills, education, and experience they bring from their country of origin. Such programs include short-term training and upgrading to help highly skilled or educated immigrants, such as physicians and engineers, obtain employment in their field of expertise; assessment of their credentials that could lead to certification without further education or training; information to help employers understand and evaluate foreign credentials; and advocacy to streamline the accreditation process for highly skilled and educated immigrants.

5. Fund efforts to improve the capacity of public education systems to successfully educate children of immigrants to improve their long-term employment outcomes and economic security. Many low-income immigrant parents invest their hopes for the future in their children. Quality education, which must include English-language instruction, is critical to these children's ability to succeed. Many school districts in urban, suburban, and rural communities are struggling to meet the needs of the increasing number of immigrant children, children of immigrants, and other English-language learners among their student population. Grants to evaluate current models, document barriers and best practices, test new approaches, provide teacher training, involve immigrant parents, and help school systems effectively educate immigrant and other English-language learners will expand employment opportunities for the next generation.

6. Fund efforts to educate and develop the leadership of immigrant and other low-wage workers to protect their workplace rights, increase wages and benefits, and improve their long-term employment outcomes. Given the complexity of labor and immigration laws, immigrant workers often need accessible information on their employment rights, and those eligible also need information on public benefits, services, and tax credits that can enhance their family's health and well being. Community organizations, worker centers, and unions and

Family Dependent on County Food Bank, David Bacon, 2001.

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their related 501(c)3 organizations all have developed excellent models of education, outreach, and leadership development that empower immigrant workers to protect and advance their workplace rights. Effective groups typically have bicultural, bilingual staff and longstanding relationships and credibility in the community. In many regions, multi-ethnic community organizations are engaging low-wage workers across lines of race, nationality, and immigration status. Together, they are projecting a powerful voice for workers' rights.

7. Fund community-based efforts to protect immigrant workers who may risk intimidation, job loss, or deportation if they participate in union organizing drives. Increased organizing activity among immigrant workers has underscored the need for community support to protect these workers from employer intimidation. The role of community and faith-based organizations in helping connect workers to unions has often been crucial. Foundations, therefore, can support the involvement of students, faith-based organizations, and community groups in efforts to support workers seeking to unionize.

8. Support advocacy and organizing to improve public policy, employer practices, and economic outcomes for low-wage immigrants. In many cases, the working conditions and economic plight of low-wage immigrant workers cannot improve without efforts to change employer practices, increase enforcement of existing laws, and push for stronger laws where gaps exist.

Federal Policy Issues

- Increase the federal minimum wage.
- Increase enforcement of wage-and-hour laws and health and safety regulations.
- Strengthen existing labor laws to protect the rights of workers to organize into unions.
- Support campaigns to legalize undocumented workers.
- Fund efforts to promote policies aimed at integrating immigrants into the social and economic mainstream.
- Restore public benefits, such as Food Stamps and health care, that help low-wage immigrants support their families.
- Expand Unemployment Insurance to cover a wider range of workers.
- Monitor implementation of the employment verification systems.
- Restore undocumented workers' rights to back pay when they are illegally fired.

Local and State Policy Issues

- Increase the local and/or state minimum wage.
- Promote campaigns for living wages and public-subsidy accountability.
- Expand public subsidies for job training and related services for immigrant workers.
- Ensure access to driver's licenses.

9. Invest in research that informs program and policy development. Such research should be scholarly and accessible to program planners, as well as organizers and advocates who could use it to bring about policy change. To maximize impact, research projects should be tied to outreach, education, organizing, and advocacy. It should also engage the media, policymakers, unions, businesses, religious institutions, and community and civic organizations in discussions about the program and policy implications of the findings and recommendations.

- *Funders interested in workforce development* can consider funding research on topics such as integrated job training models for immigrants, best practices in providing vocational English-language training, and the costs and benefits of multi-sector job-training partnerships.
- *Foundations interested in health issues* can consider funding research on topics such as innovative health insurance options for low-wage immigrant workers, including cross-border programs; health and safety conditions in sectors with high concentrations of immigrant workers; best practices in educating immigrant workers on occupational health issues; and the costs and benefits of expanding publicly funded health insurance to cover more working-poor families.
- *Funders interesting in organizing* can fund studies that examine the impact of unions in moving immigrant workers out of poverty, difficulties workers face in exercising their right to unionize, and innovative leadership and organizing models for immigrant workers.
- *Foundations interested in children of immigrants* can fund research on topics such as effective models for increasing utilization of the Earned Income Tax Credit, barriers to quality education for children in immigrant families, and the future economic outlook for second-generation immigrant workers.

10. Support legal services, advocacy, and litigation to protect and strengthen workers' rights. Foundations can support legal services for workers who have been exploited or discriminated against; research and development of model briefs and policies; training and technical assistance to lawyers who represent immigrants in employment cases; and litigation to win redress for classes of affected immigrant workers.

How Should Foundations Invest?

Foundations can think about improving employment outcomes for immigrants in a number of ways, and these approaches are not mutually exclusive.

Foundations can make grants to encourage and challenge mainstream programs, services, and policies to meet the unique needs of immigrant workers.

This strategy may be the most practical for foundations in new immigrant gateway communities that do not yet have strong immigrant organizations. It is also effective for foundations interested in ensuring that the needs and concerns of immigrant workers are taken into consideration by those working on issues affecting the broader low-wage population. Ensuring that workforce programs and policies benefit all workers, regardless of immigration status, is critically important, given the predominance of mixed-status families, particularly the fact that 75 percent of children in all immigrant families are U.S. citizens.

There are pros and cons to this strategy. Although mainstream institutions likely have deeper capacity, longer track records, and better access to resources, they often have limited cultural and linguistic knowledge and have not built relationships and trust with immigrant communities. Consequently, they may not be able to readily meet the unique needs of immigrants as effectively as immigrant-based organizations. But with proper support, mainstream organizations can expand their service and advocacy capacity and cultural and linguistic competency to meet the changing needs of their communities.

Although policies and programs targeting immigrants, such as bilingual education, can respond specifically to immigrants' needs, those that incorporate immigrants into a more universal strategy, such as Even Start, may enjoy broader public support, higher levels of funding, and greater stability. In addition, universal policies and programs are less visible and, thus, less politically vulnerable—an important consideration, particularly during times of high anti-immigrant sentiment.[75]

Foundations can also invest in collaborative programming between established mainstream workforce development groups and emerging immigrant organizations.

This approach has the benefit of helping mainstream programs become culturally and linguistically competent, building the capacity of immigrant communities to develop and run their own workforce programs in the future, and encouraging immigrant-based and mainstream organizations to collaborate on the larger set of issues facing all low-wage workers. If authentic, these collaborative relationships will become assets that remain within the community. On the down side, it takes significant time and commitment to establish the trust and relationship needed to develop—and sustain—successful partnerships.

Foundations can invest in programs and services specifically designed for and run by immigrant communities.

Cultural and linguistic competence—and the development of strong immigrant-based organizations—are the benefits of this strategy. Those funding in regions with well-established immigrant organizations, such as Boston and Chicago, will get a faster return on their investment through this strategy because a solid infrastructure is already in place. Those funding in new gateway communities, such as North Carolina and Georgia, will need to take the long view and recognize the need for emerging immigrant organizations to build their capacity before they can deliver significant program results.

Foundations can also invest in the development of networks of immigrant-based organizations across localities and across ethnic and cultural lines. Such networks allow well-established organizations to provide information, mentoring, and support to emerging organizations engaged in similar work.

Mi Escuelita Preschool, David Bacon, 1996.

Conclusion

Immigrant workers and their children play a pivotal role in the U.S. economy. Given our aging society, this role will only become more crucial in the years to come. Therefore, addressing challenges and creating opportunities for immigrants to succeed in the labor force are critical prerequisites to improving the economic security for all low-wage working families and ensuring the future vitality of our economy.

In light of these factors, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees and Neighborhood Funders Group Working Group on Labor and Community urge foundations to consider how their grantmaking can improve the working conditions and economic mobility of immigrant workers. Grantmakers have many options for responding whether they fund direct services, research, evaluation, organizing, advocacy, or litigation; whether they work at the local, regional, or national level; and whether or not they have a particular interest in immigration. Those interested in taking on a leadership role beyond grantmaking can seek out exciting partnerships with other foundations, community-based organizations, employers, chambers of commerce, local and state governments, and unions to develop and implement innovative projects.

Staggering demographic changes and an increase in mixed-status families make it clear that if we are to improve the lives of all workers, the needs of low-wage immigrant workers must be addressed. By incorporating immigrant workers into their grantmaking portfolios, foundations can play a vital role in spurring and supporting innovative strategies to improve working conditions, increase wages, enhance mobility, and strengthen economic security for all low-wage workers.

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RESOURCES ON IMMIGRANT WORKER ISSUES

This list provides contact information for organizations that are resources on immigrant worker issues. It primarily includes groups whose work was cited in this report. The list is organized alphabetically by topic area.

Contact **info@gcir.org** to obtain specific contact people at these resource organizations.

FOUNDATIONS

Ms. Foundation's Women and Labor Fund
120 Wall Street, 33rd Floor
New York, NY 10005
(212) 742-2300

Neighborhood Funders Group Working Group on Workforce Development
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 833-4690
www.nfg.org

Phoenix Fund for Workers and Communities
c/o New World Foundation
666 West End Avenue
New York, NY 10025
(212) 249-1023
www.phoenixfund.org

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Culinary and Hospitality Training Academy
c/o Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union Local 226
1630 South Commerce Street
Las Vegas, NV 89102-2705
(702) 385-2131
www.hereunion.org

D.C. Jobs Council
c/o EJC
1350 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 828-9675 x15
www.dcjobs.org

HIRE Center
816 West National Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53204
(414) 385-6920
www.milwjobs.com/adult_hire.php

Jobs for the Future
88 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 728-4446
www.jff.org

Public-Private Ventures
2000 Market Street, Suite 600
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 557-4400
www.ppv.org

Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership
303 E. Vienna Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 906-9621
www.wrtp.org

Working for America Institute
815 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
(800) 842-4734
or (202) 974-8100
www.workingforamerica.org

WORKER CENTERS

CASA de Maryland
310 Tulip Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
(301) 270-0442
http://home.us.net/~skegley/

Garment Worker Center
1250 S. Los Angeles Street
Suite 213
Los Angeles, CA 90015
Phone: (888) 449-6115
www.garmentworkercenter.org

Northeast Action

Connecticut Office:
621 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 231-2410

Massachusetts Office
30 Germania Street, Building L
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 541-0500
www.neaction.org/index.htm

Oscar Romero Day Labor Center
6006 Bellaire Boulevard, Suite 100
Houston, TX 77081
(713) 665-1284

WORKER ORGANIZING

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)
88 3rd Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11217
(718) 246-7900
www.acorn.org

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
1521 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 353-1333
www.chirla.org

Erie Neighborhood House
1347 West Erie
Chicago, IL 60622
(312) 666-3430
www.eriehouse.org

Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy
2636 Kenwood Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007
Phone: (323) 732-9961
www.tumis.com/saje/programs/fccej.php

Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
548 S. Spring Street, Suite 630
Los Angeles, CA 90013
(213) 486-9880
www.laane.org

Merrimack Valley Project
6 Locke Street
Andover, MA 01810
(978) 475-4454
www.uuandover.org/socj-mvp.htm

National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
1020 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue
4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60660
(773) 728-8400
www.nicwj.org

National Network of Day Laborers
c/o CHIRLA
1521 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 353-1333 or
(773) 398-4023

Omaha Together/One Community
3015 Harney Street, Suite 100
Omaha, NE 68131
(402) 344-4401

Sweatshop Watch
310 Eighth Street, Suite 303
Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 834-8990
www.sweatshopwatch.org

Tenant's and Worker's Support Committee
3805 Mount Vernon Avenue, #5
Alexandria, VA 22305
(703) 684-3687
www.twsc.org

The Workplace Project
91 N. Franklin Street, Suite 207
Hempstead, New York 11550-3003
(516) 565-5377

UNIONS

American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO)
Janet Shenk
jsenk@aflcio.org
(202) 637-5007
www.afl-cio.org
or www.workingfamilies.com

Neighborhood Funders Group Working Group on Labor and Community

Susan Chinn, Co-Chair
(310) 468-1288
or schinn@comcast.net

Regina McCraw, Co-Chair
(312) 786-9377
or reginamc@corecomm.net

IMMIGRANT WORKER POLICY

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
820 1st Street, NE, #510
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-1080
www.cbpp.org

Chinese for Affirmative Action
17 Walter U. Lum Place
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 274-6750
www.caasf.org

National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium
1140 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-2300
www.napalc.org

National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support
1000 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 339-9328
www.nationalcampaign.org

National Council of La Raza
1111 19th, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-1670
www.nclr.org

National Employment Law Project
55 John Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10038
(212) 285-3025
www.nelp.org

National Immigrant Law Center
3435 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2850
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(213) 639-3900
www.nilc.org

Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
(an affiliate of The Appleseed Foundation of Washington, D.C.)
941 O Street, Suite 105
Lincoln, NE 68508
(402) 438-8853
www.neappleseed.net

UNIVERSITY-BASED CENTERS

Center for Labor Research and Education

Institute of Industrial Relations
University of California, Berkeley
2521 Channing Way
Berkeley, CA 94720-5555
(510) 643-7213
http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu

University of California, Los Angeles
Hershey Hall 2nd floor
Box 951478
Los Angeles CA 90095-1478
(310) 794-5983
www.labor.ucla.edu/

Institute on Labor and Employment

University of California, Berkeley
2521 Channing Way, #5555
Berkeley, CA 97420-5555
(510) 642-1705

University of California, Los Angeles
Box 951478
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1478
(310) 794-5957
www.ucop.edu/ile/

LABOR-RELATED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
425 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20536
(800) 375-5283
www.immigration.gov

Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission
1801 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20507
(202) 663-4900
www.eeoc.gov

National Labor Relations Board
1099 14th Street
Washington, DC 20570-0001
(202) 273-1770
www.nlrb.gov

Social Security Administration
Office of Public Inquiries
Windsor Park Building
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235
(800) 772-1213
www.ssa.gov

DATA SOURCES

U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233
www.census.gov

U.S. Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210
(866) 4-USA-DOL
www.dol.gov

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
Postal Square Building
2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20212-0001
(202) 691-5200
www.bls.gov

Urban Institute Immigration Project
2100 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016
(202) 833-7200
www.urban.org

VIDEO RESOURCES

Occupation
An excellent documentary on Harvard University's living-wage campaign and the struggles of immigrant custodial and cafeteria workers on campus.

$30/individual and $200 institution, including shipping and handling.

To purchase, go to www.enmassefilms.org or send a check payable to Phillips Brooks House Association, EnmasseFilm, P.O. Box 380365, Cambridge, MA 02238.

In Search of America, Episode 3: Homeland from ABC News

Clear, forceful story of immigrants in Utah, mainly from Mexico and how they are affected by the new homeland security measures, especially Operation Tarmac at airports. Narrated by Peter Jennings and originally aired September 2002.

$29.95/copy, plus $6.95 for shipping and handling.

To purchase, call (800) 505-6139 and ask for item #5020905-01.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GCIR and the NFG Working Group on Labor and Community extend our thanks to The Ford Foundation, The Hitachi Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation for their generous support to produce *Newcomers in the American Workplace: Improving Employment Outcomes for Low-Wage Immigrants and Refugees* as a tool to inform foundations on this topic.

We are grateful to the many individuals who shared with us their knowledge and expertise on immigrant workforce development issues. They are: Ana Avendano, formerly with the United Food and Commercial Workers; Ann Bastian, New World Foundation and Phoenix Fund; Tim Bell, Erie Neighborhood House; Sara Campos and Marielena Hincapie, National Immigration Law Center; Janice Fine, Economic Policy Institute; Roger Hinkle, Milwaukee HIRE Center; Tom Holler, Omaha Together/One Community; Stephen Horsford, Culinary & Hospitality Training Academy; Jen Kern, ACORN; John Liss, Tenent and Workers Support Committee; Gordon Mar, Chinese Progressive Association; Nancy Mills, Working for America Institute; Milo Mumgaard, Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest; Roxanna Perez, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles; Uriel Perez Espinoza, HERE Local 17; Katie Quan and Warren Mar, Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California, Berkeley; Nelson Reyes, Oscar Romero Day Labor Center; Lety Salcedo, SEIU Local 1877; BetzaBeth Sanchez, Livingston, Adler, Pulda, Meiklejohn & Kelly, P.C.; Roxana Tynan, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy; and Ted Wang, Chinese for Affirmative Action.

Our deepest appreciation goes to numerous colleagues who reviewed several drafts of the report and shared their insightful comments and suggestions: Susan Chinn, Discount Foundation and the NFG Working Group on Labor and Community; John Colborn and Taryn Higashi, Ford Foundation; Marcia K. Festen, Marcia K. Festen Associates; Spence Limbocker, Neighborhood Funders Group; Karen Narasaki, National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium; and Ellen Widess, Rosenberg Foundation.

In particular, Barbara Dyer, Renata Hron Gomez, and Mark Popovich of The Hitachi Foundation helped us integrate into the paper the critical role of employers and the impact of broader economic trends on the future employment prospects of low-skill immigrants. And Janet Shenk of the AFL-CIO, who is a trustee of the Arca Foundation, helped us understand the important role organized labor plays in improving employment outcomes for immigrant and other low-wage workers.

Thanks to Michael Fix of the Urban Institute, who provided leads to relevant studies and reviewed our usage of data; Linton Joaquin of the National Immigration Law Center, who provided legal review of immigration issues; and Charles Kamasaki of the National Council of La Raza, who shared the research and analyses produced by his organization on this and related topics.

This paper would not have been possible without its co-authors, Tyler Moran, now a policy analyst at the National Immigrant Law Center, and Daranee Petsod of GCIR. Tyler conducted extensive research, including literature review and interviews with experts in the field, and produced a solid first draft of the report. Her work built on initial research and writing by Marc Bendick and Mary Lou Egan and supplemental research by Alison De Lucca and Rob Paral. Building on Tyler's work and extensive comments from the review committee, Daranee played a pivotal role in framing and refining the report's structure, content, and recommendations. Her work as chief editor is deeply appreciated. Finally, we thank Alison De Lucca, Amanda Kellett, and Mingyew Leung for their proofreading assistance.

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